

***THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD***  
**Raising Champions for Christ – Week 5**  
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The title of this sermon is “The Discipline of the Lord.”

This is week 5 of our sermon series on “Raising Champions for Christ.”

The big idea of this series is, “If we raise our children to win in athletics, and academics, and the arts, but they go to hell, then we have failed them.”

Today we are going to talk about Biblical discipline.

Some people say that parents shouldn’t spank or rebuke their children. All they should do is teach them right behavior, and then praise them when they get it right.

But imagine if a math teacher took that approach. Not correcting a child when they get it wrong, but only teaching a child, and then praising them when they get it right.

Imagine if a coach took that approach. Not correcting his team when they do something wrong; when they don’t play hard enough, or practice hard enough; or when they are late for practice; or when make mistakes in practice and on the court; instead; he only teaches and praises his team when they do something right.

Or imagine if the police took this approach. Not correcting people when they break the law; but only teaching people the law and then praising them for good behavior.

How effective would these people be at their job? How effective would the math teacher, the coach, and the police be at influencing behavior. Not very.

That’s because this is an unbiblical approach to behavior modification.

God made us, and He knows what we need to do to teach people how to behave.

**Ephesians 6:4** “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Discipline and instruction. Instruction involves teaching your children the right way to behave. Discipline involves correcting your children when they misbehave.

**John Angell James**, a Christian author in the nineteenth century, wrote, “So a parent may deliver the best instructions. But if he does not by discipline eradicate evil tempers, correct bad habits, repress rank corruptions, nothing excellent can be looked for.”

## **WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?**

What is discipline? **Discipline is the use of rebuke and the rod to correct ungodly behavior in your child.** Let’s unpack this definition.

**One: Discipline is the use of rebuke. Proverbs 13:1** “A wise son responds to his father’s discipline, but a mocker doesn’t listen to rebuke.”

What is a rebuke? The dictionary says it is “an expression of sharp disapproval or criticism (Google).”

It is when you tell your children, “Stop that. That’s bad behavior. That is inappropriate. Don’t say that. Don’t use that language. That’s a bad attitude. That is sinful behavior. That is wrong. That is foolish.”

It is pointing out a child’s misbehavior, as opposed to laughing at it, or it ignoring it.

**Two: Discipline is the use of the rod.**

The rod stands for physical punishment. Spanking. Pinching. Grounding. Time out. Taking away a child’s toys. Etc. Something painful. Something that strongly motivates a child to modify their behavior.

**Proverbs 13:24** “The one who will not use the rod hates his son, but the one who loves him disciplines him diligently.”

**Three: The purpose of discipline is correction. Proverbs 6:23** “For a command is a lamp, teaching is a light, and corrective discipline is the way to life.”

The purpose of discipline is not payback, but correction. It is to help the child grow. It is for the child’s improvement. For their betterment. It is to help them develop good character.

**Four: The purpose of discipline is to correct ungodly behavior.**

Ephesians 6:4 says we must bring them up in the discipline *of the Lord*.

The goal is not just to teach them to behave the way we want them to behave. The goal is to help them develop godly character; character that pleases God; character that conforms to the word of God; Christ-like character. Actions and attitudes that honor God.

To better understand “the discipline of the Lord,” let’s look at several Biblical principles about discipline.

## **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DISCIPLINE?**

**One: It is a command.**

**Proverbs 23:13** “Don’t withhold discipline from a youth; if you punish him with a rod, he will not die.”

To ignore your child’s misbehavior, or to laugh at it, is a sin.

To neglect to rebuke your child, and to use the rod, is a sin.

God hasn’t called you to be your child’s friend; or to act like your child’s peer. Friends don’t discipline one another. God has commanded you to discipline your children.

## **Two: It is an act of love.**

Some parents claim to love their children too much to discipline them. But the Bible teaches the opposite. It says that discipline is an act of love.

How is discipline an act of love?

### **One: Discipline is an act of love because God does it.**

**Proverbs 3:12** “for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.”

God is love (1 John 4:8).

Everything He does is loving. If God disciplines His children, then it must be an act of love.

**J.C. Ryle** wrote, “Reader, if you want to train your children wisely, take note of how God the Father trains His. He does all things well; the plan that He adopts must be right. See, then, how many things there are that God withholds from His children.... See how often God chastens His people with trial and affliction....”

### **Two: Discipline is an act of love because God commands it.**

God is love, so His will is best. His commands are not a burden (1 Jn 5:2-4). They are for our benefit, not our misery (Is 48:17).

Think about your rules for your children. Are they to make your kids miserable, or to protect them? If God commands us, then it is good for us.

### **Three: Discipline is an act of love because the Bible declares it.**

**Proverbs 13:24** “The one who will not use the rod hates his son, but the one who loves him disciplines him diligently.”

The Bible states that discipline, when applied properly, is an act of love.

**Four: Discipline is an act of love because parents do it out of love for God.**

The reason we discipline is not merely to help our kids, but out of obedience to God. And the reason we obey God is because we love Him.

**Five: Discipline is an act of love because the goal is to train your children in the way they should go (Pr 22:6).**

The goal of discipline is not to hurt, although it is painful. The goal is not revenge.

The goal is to help them go the right way. The goal is their betterment, not their punishment. The goal is their maturity, not their misery. The goal is investment, not payback.

**Three: It is necessary.**

Why does the Bible command us to discipline our children? Because they need it.

**Proverbs 22:15** “Foolishness is bound to the heart of a youth; a rod of discipline will separate it from him.”

Children are naturally foolish.

What does that mean?

**One: They don't know what is right.** They need to be taught right from wrong.

**Two: They know what is right, but they don't want to do it.** They need motivation.

**Three: They want to do what is right, but they do not have willpower to do it.** They are too immature to resist temptation. They need parental control.

Children are naturally foolish, and discipline separates them from it.

Discipline is refusing to let your children act the fool. You are going to step in and teach them how to behave, and then make them behave.

**Proverbs 29:15** “A rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a youth left to himself is a disgrace to his mother.”

There are two kinds of parents. Those who discipline their children, and those who leave their children to themselves.

They let their children do whatever they want. They might advise their children. They might counsel their children. They are there to help their children. But they do not make their children behave. Essentially the child is in charge of himself, and much of what goes on in the family.

And the Bible says that when you neglect discipline, when you leave a child to himself, he will not go the right way. He will become a disgrace to his mother.

Children need discipline or they will not go the right way.

Discipline is refusing to let your children be in charge. It is refusing to let your children have whatever they want; and do whatever they want; and act however they want.

**Proverbs 19:18** “Discipline your son while there is hope; don’t set your heart on being the cause of his death.”

Without discipline your child is headed for destruction. They are headed for death – spiritual death, and physical death. Discipline is refusing to be a willing party to your child’s destruction. It is refusing to allow your child to go down the path of destruction.

Children need discipline.

And this is another reason why discipline is an act of love.

The Biblical definition of love is doing what is best for your children, not what makes them feel good. It is meeting your child's needs, not their wants.

If all you do as a parent is try to make your child feel good, then you will be a bad parent. If all you do as a parent is give your children what they want, then you will be a bad parent. Discipline is what is best for a child; it is what a child needs.

This is the way God has wired all of us. Pain is the best preacher. Suffering is more powerful than a sermon.

John Maxwell said that people change when they hurt enough that they have to. People change when they realize that the cost of disobedience is higher than the cost of obedience.

#### **Four: It is wise.**

**Romans 11:33** "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!"

There are many modern psychologists and family therapists who claim that discipline is both unnecessary and harmful. But these people are claiming to be wiser than God.

**J.C. Ryle** wrote, "Reader, don't be wiser than God; train your children as He trains His."

When you discipline your children, not only are you obeying God's command, but you are following God's example.

**Revelation 3:19** "As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent."

#### **Five: It is beneficial.**

Many people do not discipline their children because they don't want to damage their children; they don't want to scar their children for life; they don't want their

children to grow up to be abusive, violent, and psychopathic. But Biblical discipline does not harm or damage a child. It helps the child.

There is a difference between discipline and abuse. Abuse is when the punishment harms the child; injures the child; damages the child, such as hitting and punching the child; or yelling and screaming at the child; or using abusive and insulting language; or burning the child; or depriving it of necessities, like food, and water; or breaking the child's bones; or endangering the child's life.

Biblical discipline, on the other hand, does not harm the child. Does it hurt the child? Yes. Pain is a necessary component of effective discipline. What would happen if the government stopped punishing people for theft, and murder, and rape? They frequency would skyrocket. Discipline is painful, but it does not injure the child. It does not damage the child.

Not only is discipline not destructive, it is beneficial. Highly beneficial.

## **THE BENEFITS OF DISCIPLINE**

The Bible lists many benefits of discipline.

It will help your children live an abundant life. **Proverbs 6:23** "For a command is a lamp, teaching is a light, and corrective discipline is the way of life."

It will separate your child from foolishness. **Proverbs 22:15** "Foolishness is bound to the heart of a youth; a rod of discipline will separate it from him."

It will save your child from death. **Proverbs 23:14** "Punish him with a rod, and you will rescue his life from Sheol."

It will help your child grow in wisdom. **Proverbs 29:15** "A rod of correction imparts wisdom...."

I want to mention five ways that discipline will benefit your child.

**ONE: Discipline teaches your child social skills.**



Your child is naturally anti-social. Their natural inclination is to be selfish, rude, annoying, inconsiderate.

Without discipline, a child grows up to be someone that other people don't like. But discipline smooths your child's rough edges so that they can get along with others.

In an article in the Wall Street Journal, **Abigail Shrier** said, "Discipline socializes children. They become tolerable to those who don't already love them."

Where do kids learn social skills? Not by rubbing shoulders with other immature kids. They learn social skills from their parents who teach them good behavior, and discipline them for bad behavior.

**Jordan Peterson**, the famous psychiatrist and professor, wrote a book last year called *12 Rules for Life*. Rule 5 is, "Do not let your children do anything that makes you dislike them." **He wrote**, "Parents are the arbiters of society. They teach children how to behave so that other people will be able to interact meaningfully and productively with them."

**Luke 2:52** "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people."

This is how Jesus grew as a child – in favor with God and with people. Discipline teaches our children how to gain favor with people; they are going to need to get along with others in order to live a happy, abundant life.

**TWO: Discipline teaches your child submission.**

Your child will never be happy and successful unless they learn to submit to authority (1 Pt 2:13).

In life you have to submit to God, to church leaders, to your husband (if you are a wife), to your boss, to the government, to the HOA, to the coach, to the referee, etc.

But submission does not come naturally. Our natural inclination is to be completely independent of authority; to do our own thing; to go our own way; to rule ourselves; to be the captain of our ship.

And we like to be in charge of everyone around us. We don't like it when people tell us what to do. We don't like to follow orders. We don't like to not be in control.

So how do we teach our children the skill of submission – of respect for authority? With discipline.

By training them to submit to our authority, we are teaching them how to live under authority for the rest of their lives.

By forcing them to submit to you, you are teaching them that they are not in charge of everyone; that they have to follow orders; they have to obey rules.

### **THREE: Discipline teaches your child self-control.**

For your child to be a successful adult, they have to learn self-control. They have to learn how to do what is right, even when they don't feel like it.

Where do kids learn self-control? They are supposed to learn it from their parents.

Parental discipline produces self-discipline.

When you don't discipline your children, you are letting them do whatever they feel like doing. You are allowing them to be governed by their feelings and emotions. That's the opposite of self-control.

But when you discipline your child, you are teaching them to obey you, even when they don't feel like it. You are teaching them to have respectful attitude, even when they don't feel like it. You are teaching them to control their temper, to control their mouth, to control their actions, even when they don't feel like it. You are teaching them to sit still, to be quiet, to go to bed, to do their schoolwork,

and to do their chores, even when they don't feel like it. You are training them to do what is right, regardless of their feelings and emotions.

This sets them up for success for the rest of their lives.

#### **FOUR: Discipline teaches your child sowing and reaping.**

God has created a spiritual law called the law of sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7). It is also called the law of consequences. You reap what you sow.

**Charles Stanley** says it like this: "You reap what you sow, more than you sow, and later than you sow."

In other words, there are consequences for your behavior. That's the way that real life works. That's the way that adult life works.

If you are habitually late for work, then you will get fired. If you can't get along with others at work, then you will get fired. If you break the law, you will go to jail. If you commit adultery, you will get a divorce. If you don't make church a priority, your spiritual life will suffer. You reap what you sow.

Kids have to learn this to be happy and successful in life. But when you don't discipline them, when you let them have their way, and when you let them get away with misbehavior, then you are teaching them that there are no consequences for their actions; that they can get away with misbehavior, with irresponsibility, with a bad attitude, with bad social skills.

But when you discipline them, you teach them the law of consequences. You can choose to do wrong, but you will have to pay for it. Or you can choose to do right, and reap the rewards down the road.

#### **FIVE: Discipline teaches your child saintliness.**

This is the primary purpose of discipline. It is to teach them to live in a way that please God. To live a holy life. To cultivate actions and an attitude that honor God.

How does God grow us? With pain. With suffering. He allows us to experience suffering in order to grow us in saintliness. We simply cannot grow without suffering and hardship. That's the way we are made. Nothing gets our attention like suffering. Nothing motivates us to change like suffering.

And that's the reason we discipline our children. We use pain and suffering to motivate them to leave a self-centered life and to live a God-centered life.

**Hebrews 12:11** "No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

### **BONUS: ONE MORE REASON TO DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN**

Discipline benefits your child in many invaluable ways, but do not forget that discipline will also benefit you as the parent.

Undisciplined children will bring you misery when they are young, and sorrow when they are old.

**Proverbs 29:17** "Discipline your child, and it will bring you peace of mind and give you delight." **Proverbs 10:1** "A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son, heartache to his mother." **Proverbs 17:21** "A man fathers a fool to his own sorrow; the father of a fool has no joy."

Children are meant to be one of God's greatest gifts. But if YOU don't discipline your children, they can be a major pain in the neck – for you and for everyone who knows them.

**Pastor Tommy Nelson** said, "Raising a kid is like raising a Siberian tiger cub; if you don't do a good job early, they will grow up to eat you."

### **THE PROPER METHOD OF DISCIPLINE**

Let's finish by looking at the proper method of discipline.

**ONE: Give the child a proper command.**

What is a proper command? It must not be sinful. It must not be impossible or unreasonable. It must be understandable. They don't need to understand the reason, but they need to understand what is expected of them.

This is how you know when a child is old enough to be disciplined. When your child understands your command, then you should discipline them when they disobey you.

So you should be disciplining your child before they turn one, because they can already understand many of your commands.

For example, you can teach a child very early the meaning of "No." And when they defy you, you should discipline them.

## **TWO: Expect proper obedience.**

What is proper obedience? We learn proper obedience from the Bible. What does it look like when we obey God properly? Proper obedience is immediate and respectful.

Delayed obedience is disobedience.

You should not count to three; when you count, you are teaching them delayed obedience.

You should not repeat yourself, getting louder and louder, piling on the threats. That teaches delayed obedience.

Disrespectful obedience is disobedience.

If your child obeys but complains, and argues, and pouts, etc., that is not obedience.

You must expect not only godly actions, but a godly attitude.

Remember, your children are not merely commanded to obey you; they are commanded to honor you.

To honor your parents is to obey them right away with a good attitude. So you must discipline your child for delayed obedience, and for disrespectful obedience.

### **THREE: Respond to improper behavior with correction.**

Remember the two responses. Rebuke and the rod.

Sometimes you will only need to rebuke your child. To tell them to stop; tell them they were acting sinfully and they must not act like anymore.

But sometimes, if the child's misbehavior is severe, such as blatant defiance, then you need to use the rod.

This might be a spanking; or it might be a pinch on their trapezius muscle; or it might be taking away a privilege, like watching TV, or playing video games.

But never, never punish a child by keeping them home from church.

### **FOUR: Discipline with love.**

Someone defined discipline as "correction driven by love."

**1 Corinthians 16:14** "Do everything in love."

How do you discipline with love?

Do not discipline out of anger.

Do not rebuke your child with harsh and inappropriate language – yelling, insults, etc.

Do not discipline without ensuring that your child understands exactly what they did wrong, why it was wrong, and how to correct their behavior in the future.

And finally, be sure to end your time of discipline by reaffirming your love for your child.

**John Bunyan**, author of *Pilgrims Progress*, wrote, “If you are driven to the rod, then strike advisedly in cool blood, and soberly show them a) their fault; b) how much it is against your heart to deal with them in this way; c) that what you do, you do in conscience to God, and love to their souls; d) and tell them, that if fair means would have done, none of this severity should have been. This, I have proved it, will be a means to afflict their hearts as well as their bodies; and it being the way that God deals with His, it is the most likely to accomplish its end.”

**J.C. Ryle**, in his classic book on parenting called *The Duties of Parents*, wrote, “The shortest way to spoil children is to let them have their own way and allow them to do wrong and not be punished for it.”

In our culture we make light of the idea of spoiling children. In fact, I’ve heard many parents say that it is their goal to spoil their children. “I know I shouldn’t spoil him, but I just love him so much!”

I think we have lost sight of what it means to spoil a child. The word “spoil” means to “to ruin.” When you spoil a child, you ruin them. In other words, you are preventing them from being happy, successful adult. You are setting them up for failure. To spoil a child is to ruin their adulthood. That’s not something we should want.

And J.C. Ryle pointed out the quickest way to spoil a child. To let them have their own way. And to let them do wrong and not be punished for it.

In other words, the quickest way to spoil, or ruin a child, is to neglect discipline.

**Zig Ziglar** said, “A child who has not been disciplined with love by his little world will be disciplined without love by the great big world.”

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Some people say that parents shouldn't spank or rebuke their children. All they should do is teach them right behavior, and then praise them when they get it right. What is wrong with this approach?
2. What is a biblical definition of parental discipline?
3. Read Proverbs 13:1. One aspect of parental discipline is to rebuke. What does it mean to rebuke a child?
4. Read Proverbs 13:24. A second aspect of biblical discipline is the rod. What does it mean to use the rod for the purpose of parental discipline?
5. Read Proverbs 6:23. What is the purpose of parental discipline?
6. Read Ephesians 6:4. What does it mean to bring your children up in the discipline "of the Lord"?
7. Read Proverbs 13:24. What does this verse teach about discipline? How is discipline an act of love?
8. Read Proverbs 22:15. Why do children need discipline? What does it mean that "foolishness is bound to the heart of a youth"?
9. Read Proverbs 29:15. What does this verse mean by "a youth left to himself"? What happens when a youth is left to himself?
10. How does discipline benefit your child?
11. 1 Corinthians 16:14 says, "Do everything in love." How can you make sure that you always discipline your children in love?
12. What improvements do you need to make in the area of parental discipline?